



An Assessment of Factors that Influence Adoption of Monitoring and Evaluation System in NGOS in Lilongwe, Malawi

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ABSTRACT

In the domain of Organizational Development, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are generally established in organizations to improve performance and ensure the achievement of results. The establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is crucial for effective program management, accountability, and learning. Over the past five years, several studies have explored the objectives and significance of implementing M&E systems in Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). Karanja et al. (2018) in their study argued that has been in the increased uptake of Monitoring and Evaluation systems in different organizations across the globe. The need for M&E systems, as Kusek and Rists (2015) put it, has been necessitated by the need for Non-Governmental Organisations to demonstrate impact and being accountable to their actions. As such most NGOs are now adopting M&E systems to enable them track progress, measure the results so that management can made informed decisions regarding the programs and projects being implemented. However, despite the benefits that accrue from using M&E systems in NGO, the landscape remains uneven among NGOs. Therefore, the study herein was aimed at assessing the factors that influence the NGOs to adopt M&E systems for program or project management in Lilongwe district, Malawi.

The findings indicated that availability of funds in the NGO, human capacity in monitoring and evaluation and donor influence have an influence on the adoption of M&E systems in NGOs in Lilongwe district. Therefore, the study recommends that NGOs should allocate enough funds to enable the establishment and use of M&E system and allow members of staff to know how much budget is allocated and used for monitoring and evaluation within the programme or project. The study also recommends that NGOs should invest in the training of staff in M&E so that they are able to understand and implement M&E systems without challenges. Furthermore, the study recommends that using an M&E system should not only be in the spirit of living to the demands by the development partners rather it should be done to strengthening the tracking of results.

Key Words: Monitoring and Evaluation, Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Non-Governmental Organizations, Donor Influence, Human Capacity, Skills and knowledge, and Financial Status.

INTRODUCTION

In the domain of Organizational Development, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems are generally established in organizations to improve performance and ensure the achievement of results. The establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system is crucial for effective program management, accountability, and learning.

Over the past five years, several studies have explored the objectives and significance of implementing M&E systems in Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs). There is an increasing demand for organizations especially organizations working within the domain on development cooperation, to improve project outcomes. Karanja et al. (2018) argue that this need has resulted in the increased uptake of Monitoring and Evaluation in different organizations across the globe.

The fundamental purpose of implementing Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems within organizations is centered on enhancing the management and oversight of outputs, outcomes, and impacts. These systems are integral in assessing the performance of various initiatives undertaken by entities ranging from government bodies to corporate sectors, international agencies, and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). They serve as a critical tool in connecting historical data, ongoing activities, and prospective strategies to ensure continuous improvement and learning (Smith, 2019)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Akinyi (2020) in the study on County Government projects in Mombasa Kenya showed that there was positive association between budgetary allocation to monitoring and evaluation in relation to the adoption and performance of monitoring and evaluation system. The study also found that poor human capacity in monitoring and evaluation had an impact on the adoption of M&E system as staff without proper training were not competent enough to handle M&E activities affecting the overall performance of M&E system.

Mugera (2017) in his study on the factors influencing adoption of M&E system in Kenya found out that most of the NGOs had inadequate funds going to M&E. It was fully understood therefore that most organisation that have a small or no budget at all for M&E purposes also have challenges in general to adopt M&E systems.

Thompson et al. (2020) highlighted that M&E as a critical tool for evaluating the impact and sustainability of projects. Study established that lack of knowledge by staff and stakeholders on policies guiding monitoring and evaluation has a negative influence on adoption of monitoring and evaluation. The study also identified availability of funds as another critical factor that enhances the performance of monitoring and evaluation system in projects.

Kipkoech and Mutai (2020) in their study done in Tanzania recommended the implementation of comprehensive training programs for M&E personnel that enhances the adoption of robust M&E techniques to enhance organizational learning and performance.

Njiru (2024) argued that there are indeed challenges that are associated with the development of M&E systems in developing countries that include lack human and financial resources to drive the M&E processes and activities. The study further argues that most organisations in developing countries do not have the capacity and expertise to design, implement and utilise M&E systems effectively. As such the depend solely on the development partners to offer technical assistance to train and manage M&E systems.

Chirau (2022) in the study found out that the issues of planning, budgeting and the monitoring and evaluation function are not usually integrated in countries like Lesotho, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, and Liberia largely because there is lack of budgetary support for monitoring and evaluation functions.

A study by Dobi (2012), done on NGOs in Rarieda district of Kenya found out that the donor contribution to the project budget, the capacity of implementing staff in monitoring and evaluation, and the availability of funds for monitoring and evaluation activities influence the adoption of monitoring and evaluation systems. The study also concluded that monitoring and evaluation is crucial for improving the performance and effectiveness of projects.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

In line with the methodologies outlined by Kibwana and Msemo (2021), this study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. This approach was chosen to maximize data collection efficiency and to foster a comprehensive understanding of the various factors impacting the performance of M&E systems in NGOs located in Lilongwe, Malawi. The proposed design was suitable considering that interviews and questionnaires were employed for data collection.

Population of the Study

The population of the study comprised 20 local and international NGOs drawn from Lilongwe district. Most of the NGOs are headquartered in Lilongwe where most decisions are made and passed to regional and district offices. This, therefore, offered the researcher an opportunity to get reliable and valid. In addition, Lilongwe offered considering proximity to the researcher to ably collect data.

Tools for Data Collection

The researcher employed questionnaires to generate extensive data efficiently, and effectively, support for anonymity with the aim of meeting the intended objectives. The closed questions were structured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The open-ended questions were employed to help the researcher. Document review and direct observation were also used to gather more detailed information and ascertain the practices that NGOs were engaged in.

Tools for Data Analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative data analysis approaches were used. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Response rate

Category	Number
Sample NGOs	20

Sample staff from programme units	60
Staff who provided responses	52
Response rate	86.67%

The sampled respondents on the study from the 20 NGOs were 60 members of staff from programmes units. 52 of the 60 sampled employees which included project implementing staff, M&E officers and project managers provided the responses. All the sampled members of staff were given the opportunity to have a look at the questionnaire before the researcher met them for the responses.

Based on the table above, the response rate was 86.67%. This was achieved by getting buy in from the management of the sampled NGOs using a referral letter that was shared by the university prior to the data collection exercise. This therefore made the members of staff in the NGOs sampled to spare their time with the researcher to respond to the questionnaire.

Age

Age Group	Percentage	Number of Responses
Below 20 Years	0.0%	0
Above 20 below 30 Years	18.5%	10
Above 30 and Below 40 Years	48.1%	26
Above 40 years	33.3%	18
Total	100.0%	54

The table presents the age distribution of respondents in the study, with percentages and corresponding numbers of responses for each age group. It includes four age categories: Below 20 Years, above 20 below 30 Years, above 30 and Below 40 Years, and Above 40 Years.

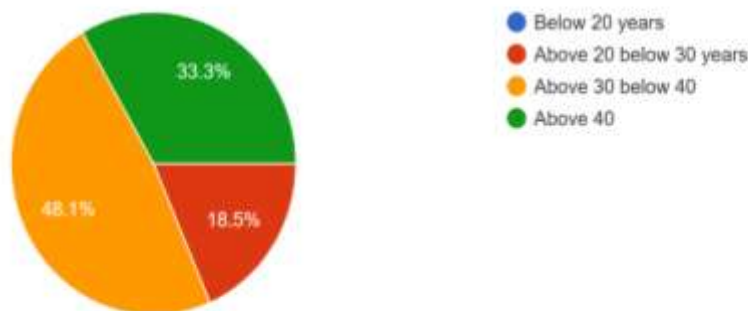
The age group "Below 20 Years" had no respondents, accounting for 0.0% of the total responses.

The "Above 20 below 30 Years" group constituted 18.5% of the respondents, with 10 individuals falling into this category.

The largest age group was "Above 30 and Below 40 Years," representing 48.1% of the sample with 26 respondents.

The "Above 40 Years" age group included 18 respondents, making up 33.3% of the total.

In total, 54 respondents participated in the study, reflecting a diverse age distribution with a significant portion of the sample being in the 30 to 40-year age range. This distribution provides insights into the age demographics of the staff involved in the study.



MAJOR FINDINGS

The study's first objective was to evaluate the impact of budget availability on the adoption of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) systems in NGOs within Lilongwe district. The findings revealed that sufficient funding is crucial for the implementation of M&E systems. When funds are readily available, staff can effectively engage in M&E activities such as data collection, analysis, and reporting. These activities are essential for providing management with

critical insights into program or project implementation. Without adequate financial resources, NGOs face challenges in establishing and maintaining robust M&E systems.

The second and third objectives focused on the influence of staff capacity and donor requirements on the adoption of M&E systems. The study found that the skills and expertise of staff are pivotal for the successful adoption and utilization of M&E systems. Informed and capable staff can develop, manage, and leverage M&E systems to enhance program effectiveness. Additionally, the role of donors was highlighted as a significant factor in M&E system adoption. Donors often mandate the use of M&E systems to ensure accountability and demonstrate the impact of funded projects. This demand for monitoring and evaluation from donors drives NGOs to adopt M&E systems to meet donor requirements and ensure the sustainability of their programs.

SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore makes the following recommendations:

- ✓ NGOs should deliberately provide information to staff on the total budget that is available for programme or project information and how the budget is split in different departments and divisions including the M&E department where it is available. In addition, the members of staff should be informed on how much budget has been allocated and used according to the plan that was put in place.
- ✓ Staff knowledge and skills in M&E should be combined with other factors if an NGO is to have a robust M&E system. There may be staff with knowledge and skills but if there are not given other resources like financial resources, it would be a challenge to implement a functional M&E system.
- ✓ NGOs should not only adopt an M&E system because they are demanded by the donors, but they should also have the culture of learning based on what is coming out of the monitoring and evaluation activities. It should be a tradition on all the NGOs to develop and use an M&E system to inform programming.

CONCLUSION

The first research objective was to assess the effect of budget in NGOs on the adoption of M&E system. The study found out that the availability of funds for M&E influences whether the NGO adopts M&E system in Lilongwe district. This is because if funds are available for M&E it is easy for staff to carry out M&E interventions that include data collection, analysis and reporting to inform management as far as programme or project implementation is concerned.

The second objective was concerned with assessing the influence of staff capacity and skills in M&E against the adoption of M&E system. The study found that, staff capacity and skills in M&E influences M&E system adoption because it is informed staff that can create and use an M&E system for, they know what it entails for an M&E system to be effective and efficient.

The third objective was to assess whether donors have an influence on NGOs' ability to adopt M&E system. The study found out that indeed donors play a greater role as far as adoption of M&E system is concerned. This is because donors require that the funds provided should bring a positive change on the programme or project participants. As such, the demand for monitoring, evaluation and accountability is always called for by the developmental partners. This therefore can only be achieved when an M&E system is put in place to track implementation of the programme or project activities with the aim of informing management to make changes or continue implementing the interventions based on the results that come from the M&E system.

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